



**DARK
HORSE
COMICS**

ORCHID

9

ORCHID



TOM MORELLO

SCOTT HEPBURN

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ORCHID

LETTERS BY
NATE PIEKOS OF BLAMBOT®
COVER BY
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Following the deaths of her mother and brother, Orchid has nothing left to lose. Hell bent on revenge, she forms an unlikely trio with a Shadow Rebel, Simon, and a mysterious warrior, Opal. When the battle to reclaim their lives and their world had just begun, Opal—revealed as the rebel martyr General China—was killed. Driven to despair by the death of her surrogate mother, Orchid tried on Opal's mask . . . and found she could call upon the great power it possessed. Hope, albeit minimal, was rekindled.

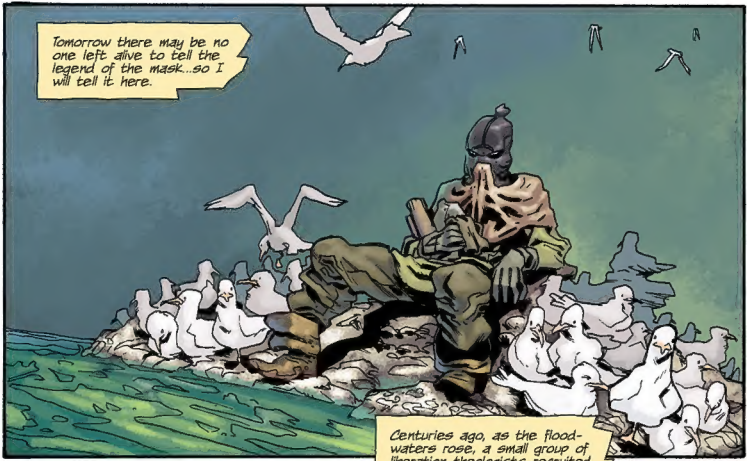
Now, the former prostitute turned rebel leader has rallied the oppressed Bridge People for a final assault on the vicious dictator Tomo Wolfe. The stakes are absolute: freedom or death.

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SPECIAL THANKS TO **MICHELE FISHER AND DAVE LAND**

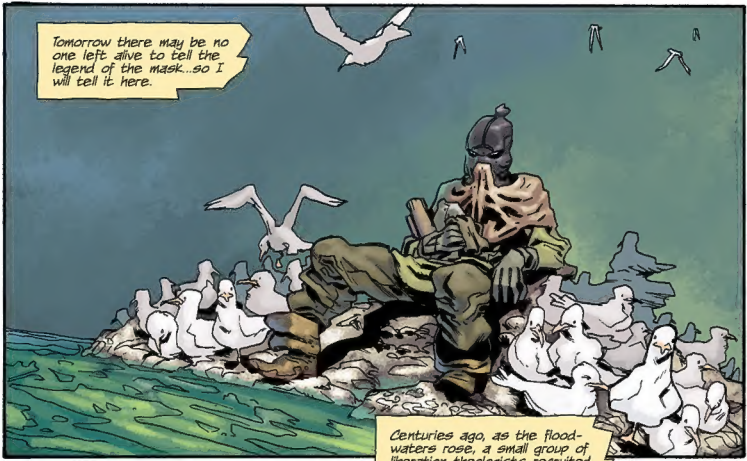
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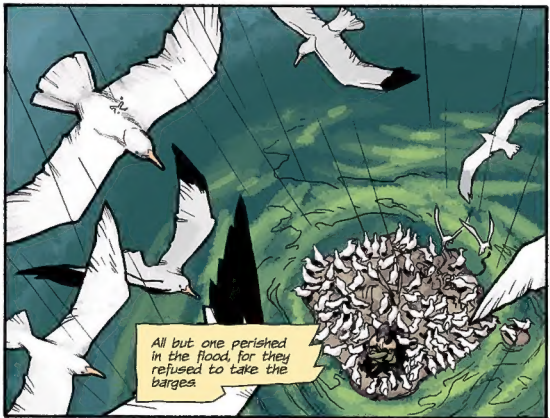
Tomorrow there may be no one left alive to tell the legend of the mask...so I will tell it here.



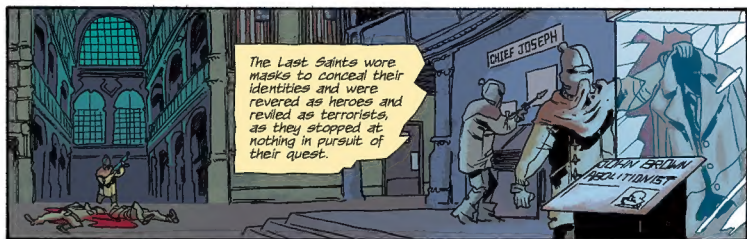
Centuries ago, as the floodwaters rose, a small group of liberation theologists recruited specialist warriors to send on a global mission.

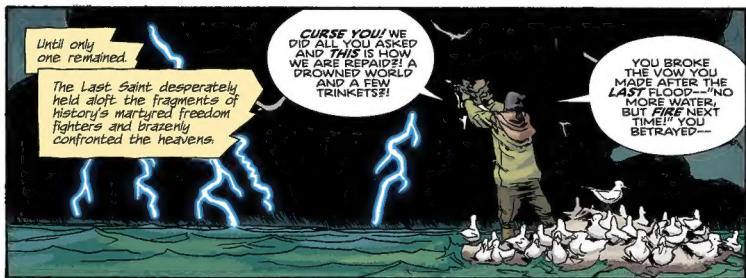
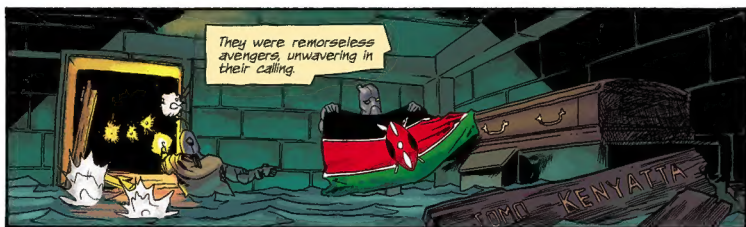


And The Last Saints were born.

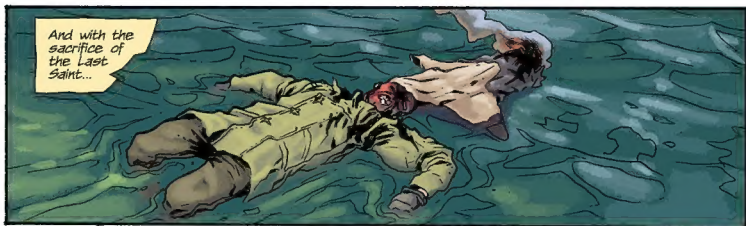


All but one perished in the flood, for they refused to take the barges.

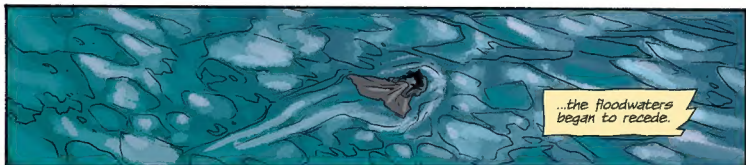




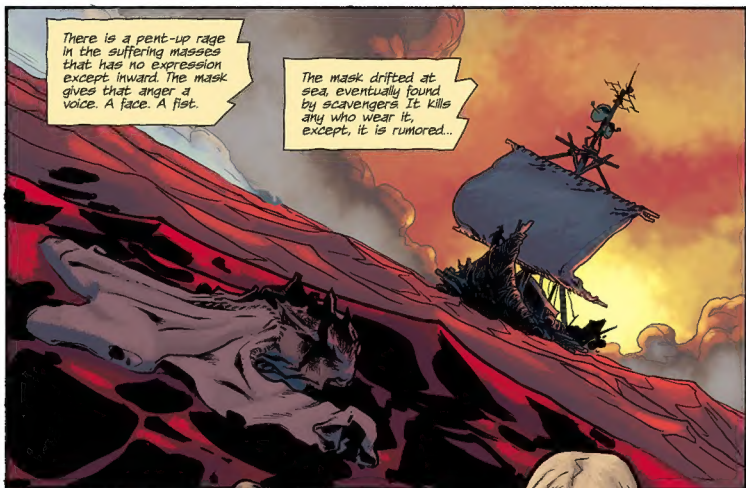




And with the sacrifice of the Last Saint...



...the floodwaters began to recede.



There is a pent-up rage in the suffering masses that has no expression except inward. The mask gives that anger a voice. A face. A fist.

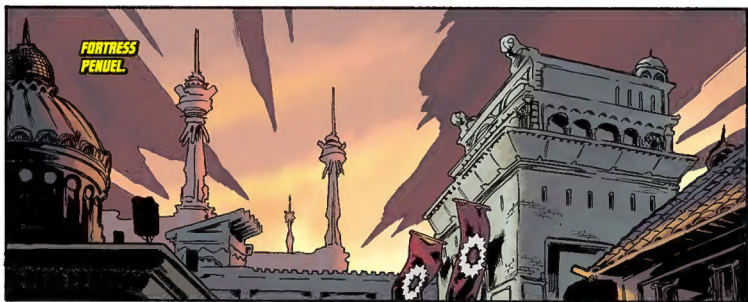
The mask drifted at sea, eventually found by scavengers. It kills any who wear it, except, it is rumored...

...a Saint.

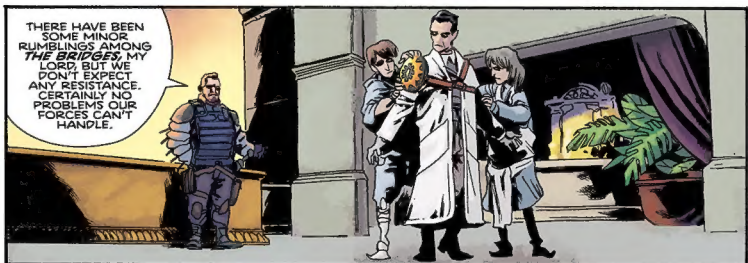
IT'S TIME, SIMON. I JUST WANTED TO SAY GOODBYE AND THANK YOU—

Oh, **YOU'RE** CERTAINLY NOT GOING ANYWHERE WITHOUT **ME** WHO WOULD GET YOU OUT OF TROUBLE?

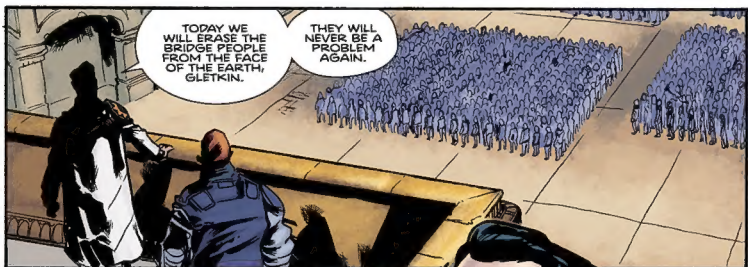




**FORTRESS
PENIEL.**



THERE HAVE BEEN
SOME MINOR
RUMBLINGS AMONG
THE BRIDGES, MY
LORD, BUT WE
DON'T EXPECT
ANY RESISTANCE.
CERTAINLY NO
PROBLEMS OUR
FORCES CAN'T
HANDLE.



TODAY WE
WILL ERASE THE
BRIDGE PEOPLE
FROM THE FACE
OF THE EARTH,
GLETKIN.

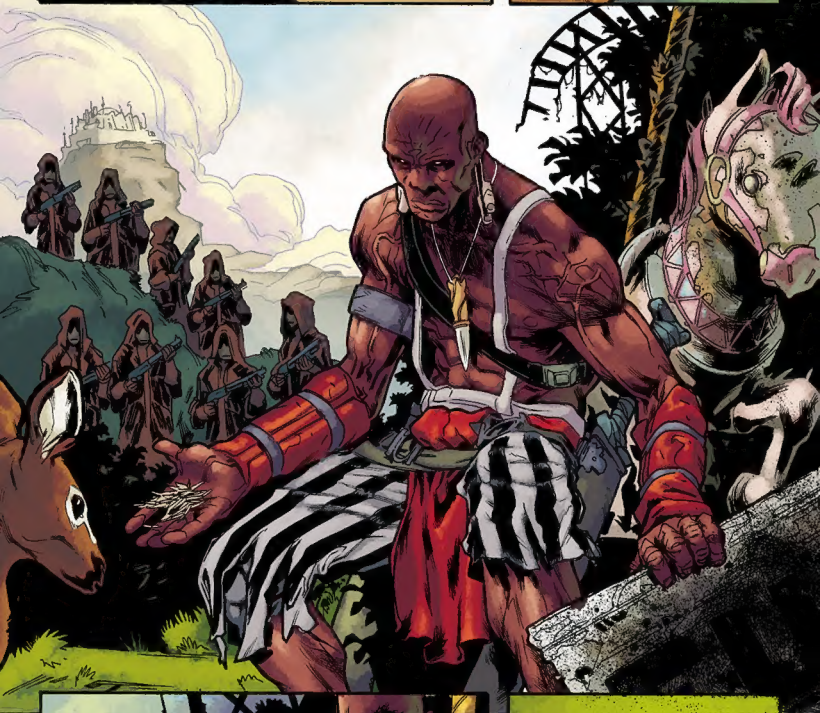
THEY WILL
NEVER BE A
PROBLEM
AGAIN.



ONE SMALL MATTER,
MY LORD...OUR
RECONNAISSANCE
MAY NOT BE ENTIRELY
COMPLETE, AS WE'VE
HAD NO REPORTS
FROM BARRABAS'S
ANIMAL PATROLS.

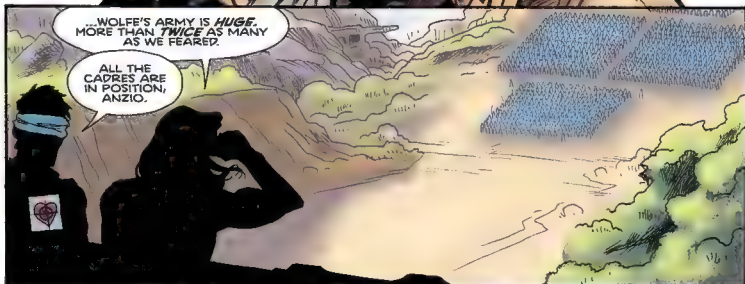
IN FACT,
NO ONE
HAS
SEEN...

WHAT?!
WHERE THE
HELL IS
BARRABAS?





DEAR GOD,
THERE'S NO
END TO
THEM!

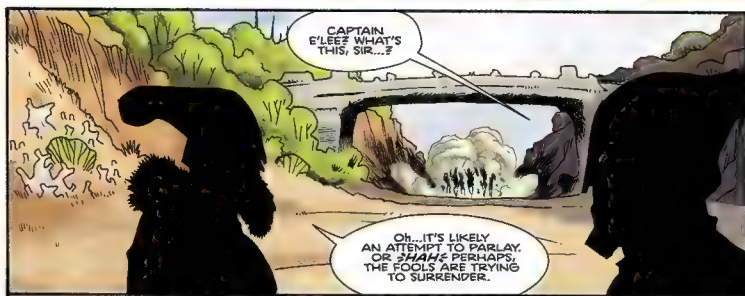


...WOLFE'S ARMY IS HUGE.
MORE THAN TWICE AS MANY
AS WE FEARED.

ALL THE
CAPRES ARE
IN POSITION,
ANZIO.



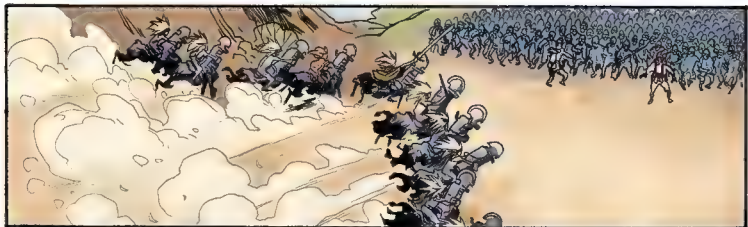
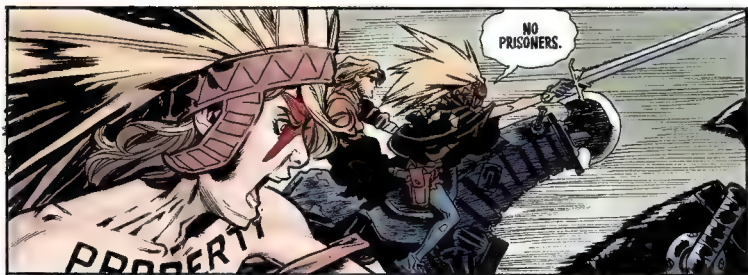
HOLD...

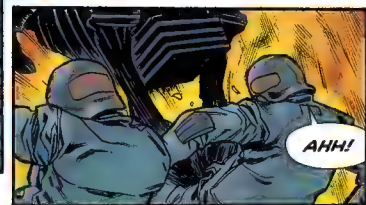
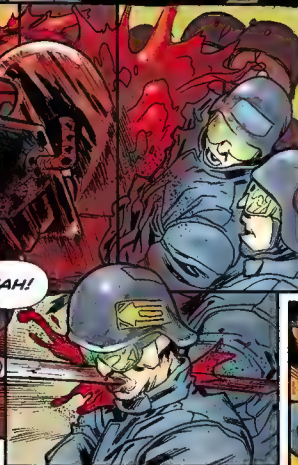
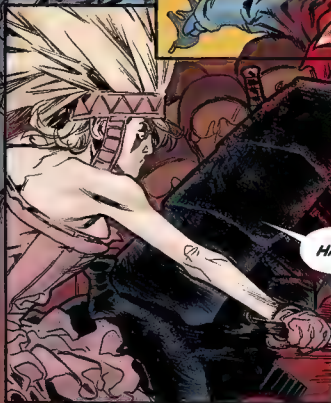


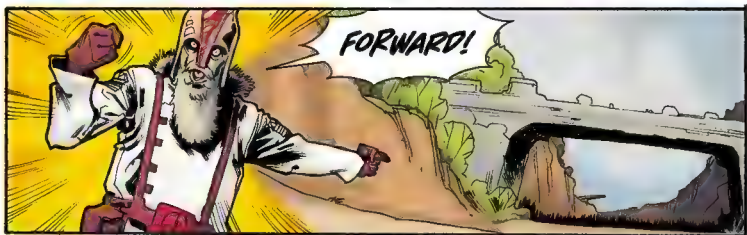
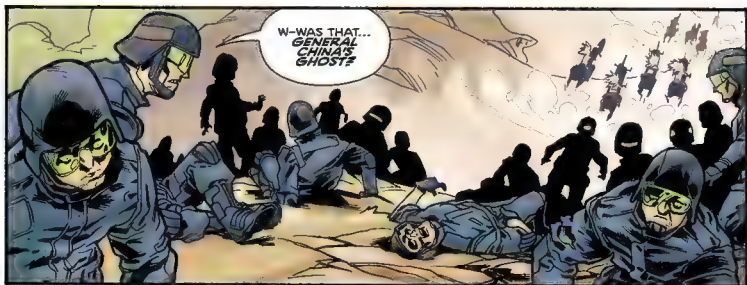
CAPTAIN
E'LEEZ WHAT'S
THIS, SIR...?

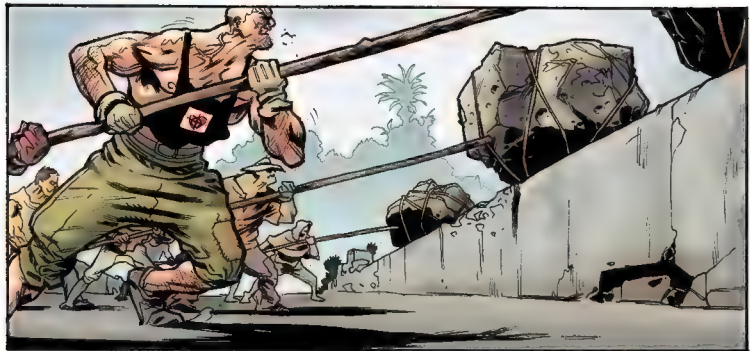
OH...IT'S LIKELY
AN ATTEMPT TO PARLAY,
OR *SHAME* PERHAPS.
THE FOOLS ARE TRYING
TO SURRENDER.

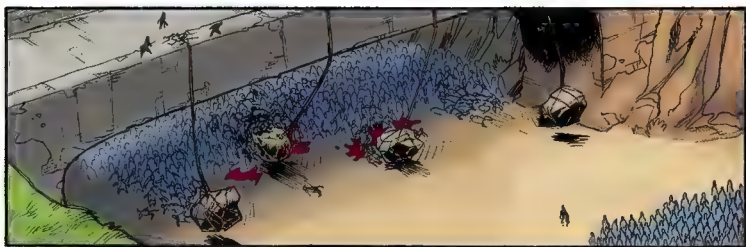
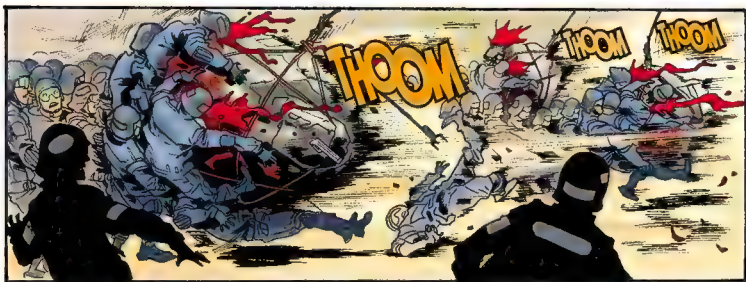
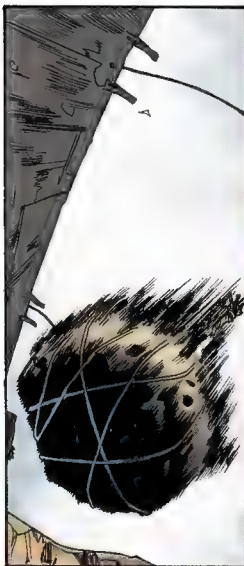
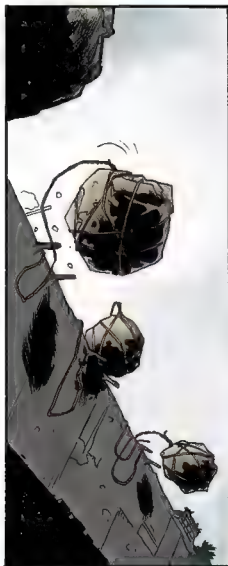


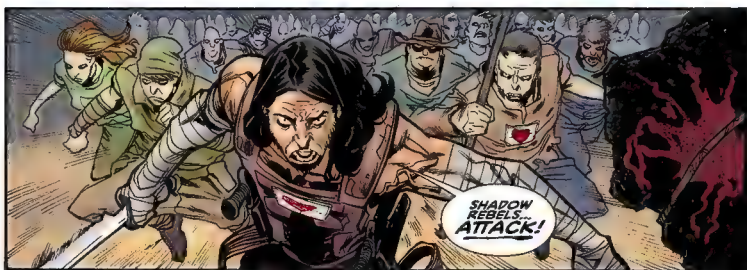
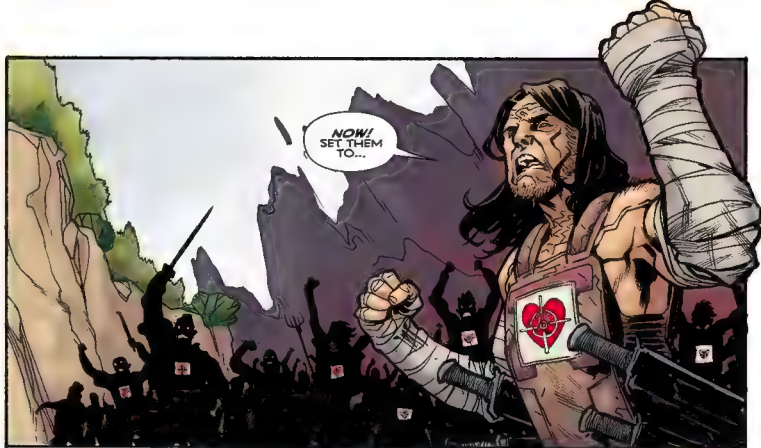


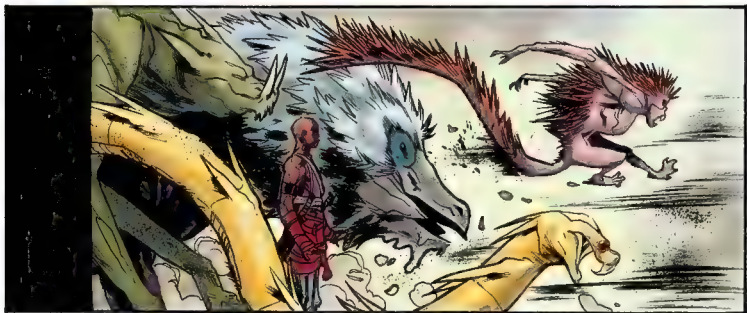
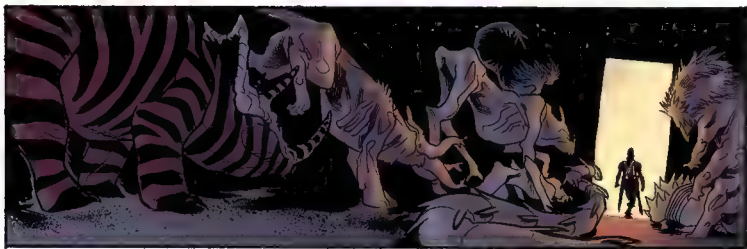


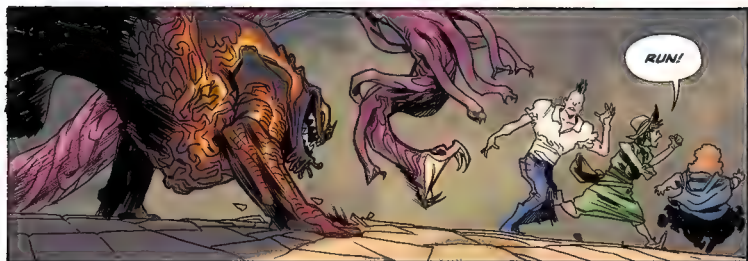
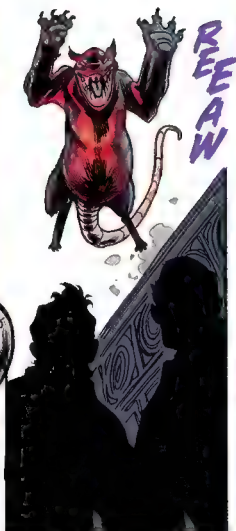


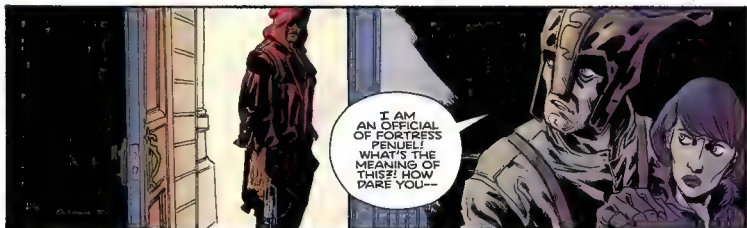


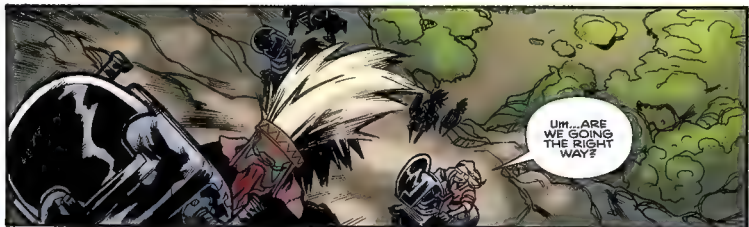
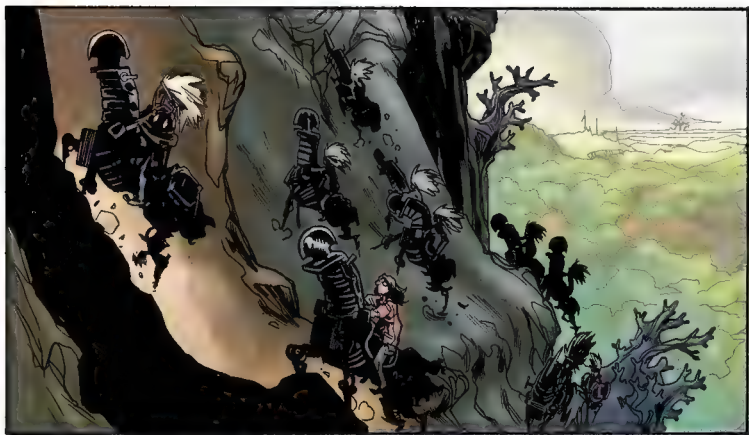












THE NIGHT BEFORE



YOU HAVE BUT ONE HOPE...



WHATEVER LITTLE TRICKS YOU HAVE PLANNED, REMEMBER--**NOTHING** CAN SAVE THE BRIDGE PEOPLE. BUT THERE *MAY* BE AN OPENING TO GET TO TOMO WOLFE. WHILE WOLFE'S ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON THE BRIDGES, ORCHID **MUST** TAKE HER CHANCE TO DESTROY HIM.

WE WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO BUY HER AS MUCH TIME AS POSSIBLE.

BUT THEY'LL HAVE TRIPLED THE GUARD ON FORTRESS PENJELLI THERE'S NO WAY IN!



THERE *IS* A WAY. I'VE SEEN IT. IT'S CALLED THE **PENITENT'S GATEWAY**, AN ENTRANCE TO THE FORTRESS LONG SEALED SHUT. DIFFICULT TO REACH, BUT IT WILL LIKELY BE UNDEFENDED.

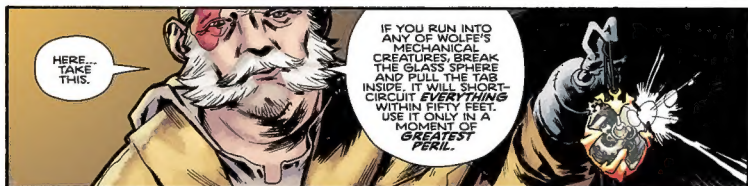
IF IT COULD BE BREACHED... YOU'D HAVE DIRECT ACCESS TO WOLFE HIMSELF.



WELL, *RIGHT* WE SHOULD PROBABLY GET THIS OVER WITH ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, BUT HOW...?

I WILL BLOW THE DAMN GATE OPEN! IF I LEAVE **NOW**, AND GIVE WOLFE'S TROOPS A WIDE BERTH, I CAN BE THERE BEFORE MIDDAY. TRUST ME, THE GATE **WILL** BE OPEN WHEN YOU ARRIVE...

AND IF IT'S NOT WE'LL BE ALONE AND UNPROTECTED BENEATH THE FORTRESS WALLS WHILE THE BRIDGE PEOPLE ARE SLAUGHTERED.





AND
WESTIN
HAS FAILED
US.

**TO BE
CONTINUED...**

THE SHADOW REBEL READER

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WRITE TO US AT: THE SHADOW REBEL READER
C/O DARK HORSE COMICS, 10956 SE MAIN STREET, MILWAUKEE, WI 53222

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How many of you out there have been going a little mad wondering when Tom and Scott might begin to tell the secret origin of General China's mask? Add that to some awesome Valk cavalry action and yet another brilliant final page, and that's another solid issue of *Orchid* in the bank! We're edging closer to the big finale, folks, so make sure to write in to our letter column before we reach the end of the series!

Hello,

Just wanted to tell you guys how much my friend and I are enjoying *Orchid*. We both fell in love with it as soon as we finished reading the first issue and the story has only gotten better. I think it's great how inspirational *Orchid*'s story is. You guys are sending out a great message about breaking one's roles and boundaries—those that are imposed upon us and those that we set up for ourselves. Keep making magic! By the way, it was so awesome to see all the prostitutes join *Orchid* to fight for their freedom! Great to see women empowered that way. Can't wait for issue 9, 10, 11, 12, and so forth!

Diego Tabar and Jesus Trujillo

Jim,

Wow! Yet another letter column where I'm becoming a regular! I really, especially, like the originality of the whole *Orchid* vibe: the live-for-today, write-for-today, even draw-for-today feeling—like there may really be no tomorrow! Did I just say "original"? Well, to be honest, some scenes in this issue reminded me of *Star Wars*... and especially Three Amigos. I wonder what'll happen, obviously, after Tomo Wolfe falls, if he ever does! It's a big, scary, postapocalyptic world out there, right? By the way, as if it's any real news, thumbs up.

Andrew J. Shaw

You keep writing in and we'll keep reading the letters, Andrew... and sometimes we'll print 'em too! I'm sure Tom would be the first to mention that epics like *Star Wars* and *Lord of the Rings*, stories that had a great impact on him growing up, have heavily influenced aspects of *Orchid*'s tale. And hey, comparing us to *Star Wars*? Not exactly a bad thing. We'll take it!

Hi guys,

A good story is developing... Penultimate pages of issue #4 show two conflicts in panels in opposition—nicely done.

Error: vocal cords not vocal chords (but a reasonable pun or two-word neologism).

Keep up the good work,
JCR
Ithaca, NY

Vocal chords... Yeah, um, we totally meant to do that. It was a two-word neologism, just like you said! Right, yeah, that's what it was... Certainly not an error on our part...

Actually, that issue went through when our proofreading ace Annie Gullion was on vacation. Editor Sierra Hahn and I are only human editors, while Annie is a superhuman proofreader who never would have missed that.

SCORPION BEARS! These things are gnarly! I love all of the twisted creatures that Scott Hepburn has thrown into the book—it really hits the message home that this world is very different from the one that we are living in now. Of course, *Orchid* is a book that is intended to mirror our own world, but having mutated animals and dilapidated settings helps to introduce an element of fantasy that distances the reader from the uncomfortable truths that are otherwise presented.

Ladies and gents, I am a fan and will continue buzzing about *Orchid*. Keep up the excellent work.

Alex "Living Silver" Sanchez
Walnut Creek, CA

We've only got three chapters left, *Orchid* fans, and trust me, they're gonna be intense. As Samuel L. Jackson once said, "Hold on to your butts!"

JIM

Jim Gibbons
Assistant Editor



Orchid and the Walks go head to head with Tomo Wolfe's secret weapon!
Orchid #10 on sale October 10, 2012

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